

**MINISTRY OF CULTURE  
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

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**BUL/ 00/002 – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION  
THROUGH THE CHITALISHTTE NETWORK (“CHITALISHTTE”)**

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# **FINAL REPORT**

**TO THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL  
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## **A. GENERAL INFORMATION**

The present report covers the main achievements and conclusions from the implementation of project "Community development and participation through the Chitalishte network" in the period 1 June 2001 – 30 September 2004. The project has a duration of 3 years and a budget of 2,475,000 USD with cost-sharing inputs by the MATRA programme of the Government of the Netherlands of 975,000 USD, by USAID - 1,000,000 USD and UNDP – 500,000 USD. A National Coordination office (NCO) and 6 regional support centres facilitate its implementation.

The project aims at:

- Building the capacity of the Bulgarian Chitalishte (traditional cultural-educational local organizations) as community centres
- Stimulating community participation and local development through the Chitalishte network
- Promoting access to modern Informational Technologies (IT) mainly in IT isolated communities
- Supporting the national and local policies directed at modification, broadening and modernizing of the role of the Chitalishte.

## **B. CHITALISHTE PROJECT OUTPUTS**

The project directed its efforts in two main courses of action:

- development of local communities and enhanced citizen participation through the Chitalishte-partners
- institutional development for modification of the Chitalishte from predominantly local cultural organizations to community centres.

## **I. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

The main grants schemes of project "Chitalishte": the Demonstration Projects Grants Scheme, the Scheme for Establishment of Internet Centres and the Emergency Needs Facility were directed at the development of local communities through strengthening of the community character of the Chitalishte. They supported innovative activities of the Chitalishte directed at the community problem issues, which had been included in the Chitalishte practices before. The efforts of the Chitalishte to work actively as community centres focused on three main aspects of social transformation:

- Enhanced participation in the local development;
- Strengthened support to the development of the local communities;
- Strengthened citizen participation.

The results and the conclusions verifying the process are mainly obtained from the practices and the reported outputs of the 67 one-year Chitalishte demonstration projects (36 completed by 30 June 2003 and 31 projects by 30 June 2004) and the experience of the 25 Internet centres established in the Chitalishte-hosts.

### **Enhanced participation in the local development**

One of the main tasks of project "Chitalishte" is the capacity building of the Chitalishte for supporting the local development. It was achieved through awarding of grants supporting demonstration innovative practices of the Chitalishte-partners and the implementation of activities leading to the enhancement of the IT culture of the population and the processes for overcoming the digital divide in the country.

The experience of the implemented projects outlined three main mechanisms for participation in the local development:

- through participation in the local problem solution;
- through application of new mechanisms and approaches to the community issues;
- through participation in the processes of local policy making.

### ***Participation in the local problem solution***

Depending on the specific character of the local issues addressed in the Chitalishte demonstration projects their new activities could be summarized in the following models for supporting of the local development:

- creation of conditions for employment through qualification and adult training (local crafts, alternative agricultural produce, Informational technologies);
- solution of important social issues of ethnic or risk groups;
- creation of conditions for development of cultural tourism as new means for living of the population;
- provision of informational, consultant and administrative services to the population of comparatively isolated regions.

The Chitalishte demonstration projects directed their attention mainly to the solution of local problems concerning the livelihood of the population. Their solution depended on the public support they attracted. Chitalishte "Dimitar Donchev – Doctora" in t. Tervel with its activities under the project "Training and consultation centre for beekeeping" provoked the renewal of the production of farm equipment for development of beekeeping in the local wood processing enterprise and at present 15 new beekeepers, who have passed training under the project, purchased equipment for the creation of their new bee gardens. The training team of that project together with the local secondary professional school have elaborated a project for constructing a transmitter of the electric energy for gluing of the wax bases to the bee frames and its production is being introduced in the school. Chitalishte "N.Vaptsarov" t. Dulovo with its results from the project "The Aronia – an alternative farming" has motivated the neighbouring municipality of Glavnitsa to seek for financing of the creation of a 200-decare aronia garden under the programme SAPARD, and the school in t. Alfatar has received funding for 50 decare to be planted with aronia.

The participation of the 25 Chitalishte Internet centres (IC), established mainly in remote and IT isolated regions and communities, in local problem solution is considerable. In some settlements as Malko Turnovo, Tvarditsa, Ivailovgrad they contributed to the improvement of the Internet connectivity, and where there was no access to the Internet, they initiated and actively participated in building routes for provision of Internet traffic. In Teteven and Byala Slatina the IC teams built routes with several retransmitting stations in places with limited access, which ensured access to the Internet for the settlements. In Teteven, Lom, Belene, etc. the teams of the Internet Centres built town networks for data transmission.

### ***Application of new mechanisms and approaches to the problems of the community***

In order to ensure enabling environment to the execution of their activities some Chitalishte with demonstration projects sought new mechanisms and approaches to the community problem solution. A new approach to the identification of the local priorities and elaboration of the strategies for development of the communities is the local forum, for which the example of the borderline municipality of Hadjidimovo is indicative. There 5 civic forums were held with over 170 participants from many settlements in the municipality. (Chitalishte "Yane Sandanski", project "Civic initiative "Integra"). As a result from their new activities some Chitalishte initiated proposals to their municipal councils addressing the solution of concrete local issues. In Pleven a draft regulation for the establishment of a citizens' eco-inspectorate was formulated and submitted to the Municipal council for approval (Chitalishte "N.V. Rakitin", project "Civil participation of the Chitalishte in the management of the environment"). In the town of Rousse the Chitalishte has put forward for discussion the issue of the employment of the young people in the municipality (Chitalishte "Hristo Botev", project "Centre for work with groups at risk at the labour market"). In the town of Kazanluk the Chitalishte has submitted to the Municipal council a programme for the reconstruction of the infrastructure of the Thracian tomb, which after its approval has been implemented (Chitalishte "Iskra", project "The Valley of Roses and the Thracian kings").

A number of Chitalishte-partners carried out lobbying and charity campaigns with broad public support. Chitalishte "Aprilov Palauzov" with its project Sunday children's school "Faith, Hope, Love" took it upon itself to take care of the free time of children up to 14 years coming from vulnerable families or other children with deviations in their behaviour. The Chitalishte is an initiator of a model for coalition of schools, homes for children lacking parental care, the NGO Christian Youth Organization (YMCA), the children's pedagogical offices and the church and thus it ensures conditions for prevention of children from groups at risk. In t. Kazanluk Chitalishte "Vazrodena Iskra" has launched a fundraising initiative for supporting children with physical handicaps. Together with the Rotary Club they have organized an auction for sale of paintings of local artists and with the funds raised a yellow trail for the blind was marked and sound traffic lights were installed at two of the crossroads of the town. The same Chitalishte has made a proposal for the building of a social complex for children with handicaps, which was submitted for approval by the Municipal council.

### ***Participation in the processes of local policy making***

Good achievement of some demonstration projects is the stronger leadership and public representation of the Chitalishte for certain community groups and their active participation in local policy making. Indicative of that are the drug prevention campaigns with their diverse and original solutions which created among the young people public attitudes against drug addiction. During the campaign "Do not die from ignorance" Chitalishte "N.Vaptsarov" Blagoevgrad held a training of the local journalists for the correct public coverage of the issue and for the implementation of systematic prevention through the local media. In t. Montana the work of the Public council for drug control, established in Chitalishte "Razum" was supported by a hot line for consultations and the local radio station opened an "Anti-drug" programme in which twice weekly specialists, young people, parents, teachers and others participated. Some projects gave impetus to the elaboration of local strategies for sustainable development on the territory of the mayoralty or the municipality (project "Ecology, beauty, business", v. Gorsko Slivovo). In t. Hissar the participants in the Chitalishte new project activities have been attracted to the preparation of a joint strategy for the development of tourism together with the municipality (Chitalishte "Ivan Vazov", project "Information tourist centre and services bureau").

### **Increased support to the community development**

Most of the Chitalishte projects created and realized innovative practices providing enabling environment for development of the local communities. Most of those practices showed sustainability and effectiveness due to the fact that they addressed concrete needs and peculiarities of the local people considering the resources of the Chitalishte and their readiness. The contribution of the Chitalishte to the development of the local communities through the experience of the funded projects may be presented in the following tendencies:

- Repeatedly growing number of beneficiaries of the Chitalishte services;
- Creation of an environment for increased information exchange and training;
- Attracting of new community groups with different ethnic origins;
- Increased support to groups at risk.

### ***Beneficiaries of the new services of the Chitalishte***

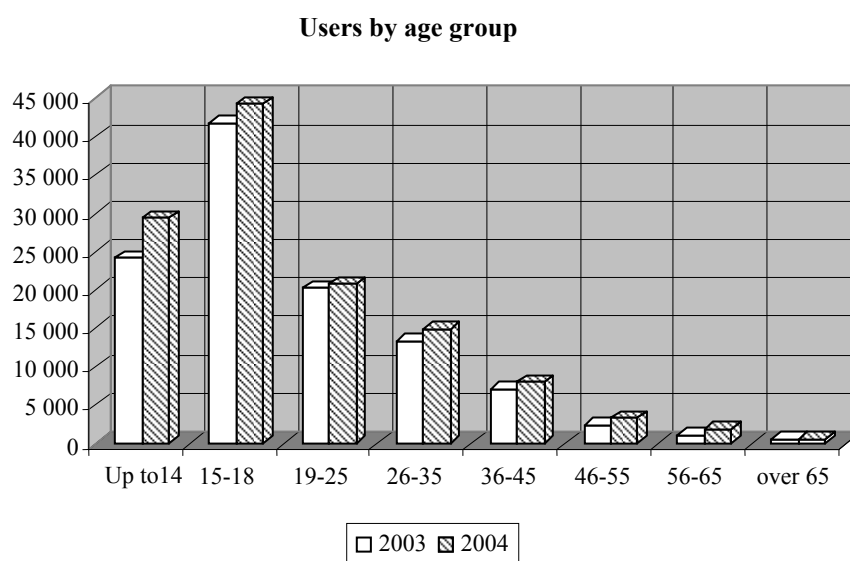
In general the services provided by the Chitalishte under the different projects could be summarized in the following categories: administrative (filling out of applications, declarations, copying, text processing, computer services, use of information, etc. mainly in village and isolated regions), training, consultations, and mediation. The total number of the administrative services reported by the Chitalishte during the period under review is over 64,970. The number of the consultations provided is over 1,500. The Chitalishte have mediated in the search of employment, carrying out of sales, submitting complaints, etc. 613 times.

The total number of the beneficiaries of the services provided in the 67 Chitalishte demonstration projects is 43,440: of them 17,475 are men and 25,965 are women. The biggest group of beneficiaries is the one of the young people up to 18 years – 17,243. Some of the beneficiaries of those activities are new for the

Chitalishte community groups. Others are among the participants in the traditional activities: amateur arts, art schools, libraries, which have broadened their interests with the new spheres of activities of the Chitalishte. Naturally, most of the people are using the services of the administrative and information centres, especially in the more isolated settlements and communities. The most visited centres are the ones in Chitalishte "Gradishte" – t. Svoze with 3,633 people, in Chitalishte "Hristo Botev" in v. Partiznin – 2,010 people, in the Roma Chitalishte "V.Levski" in t. Kyustendil – 4,000 people, Chitalishte "Probuda" in v. Nikola Kozlevo – 1,290 people, Chitalishte "Nov Zhivot" in v. Chepintsi – 1,515 people. The Children's centre for the leisure time of the Chitalishte "Ivan Vazov", t. Berkovitsa has been used by 2,680 visitors, and in the Centre for Services for the free time of the Children of Chitalishte "Dobri Voinikov, t. Shoumen – 1,190 mainly children have used the new services of the centre. The administrative Centre of Chitalishte "Tsvyatko Radoynov", v. Kran has serviced 2,012 people and the one in the village of Petarch – 1,220 people. Chitalishte "N.Vaptsarov" Blagoevgrad (over 4,700 participants) and Chitalishte "Razum" t. Montana (over 1,800 participants) have attracted the biggest number of participants in the organized campaigns for drug prevention.

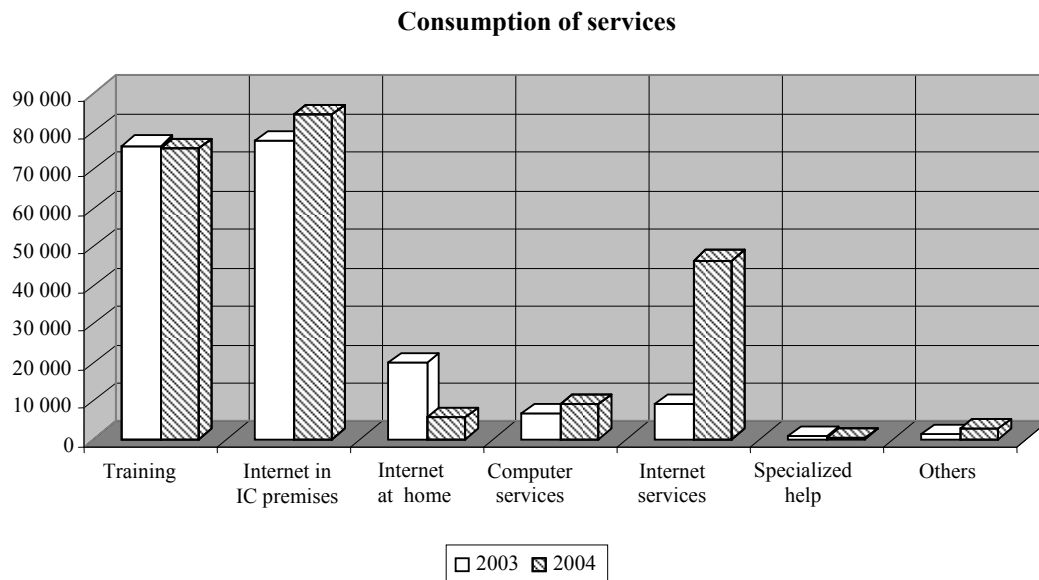
During the whole period under review the tendency for the growing use of IT services is constant. For a year and half of active work in the framework of Chitalishte project the 25 Chitalishte Internet centres have provided to their clients 235,000 services. Among the beneficiaries the biggest group is the one of the school children, followed by the group of the working young people up to the age of 35. (*Graph 1*)

*Graph 1*



Until 30 June 2004 the Internet centres have provided 415,533 hours of services to customers. The most popular services are the trainings in computer literacy and usage of the Internet. (*Graph 2*)

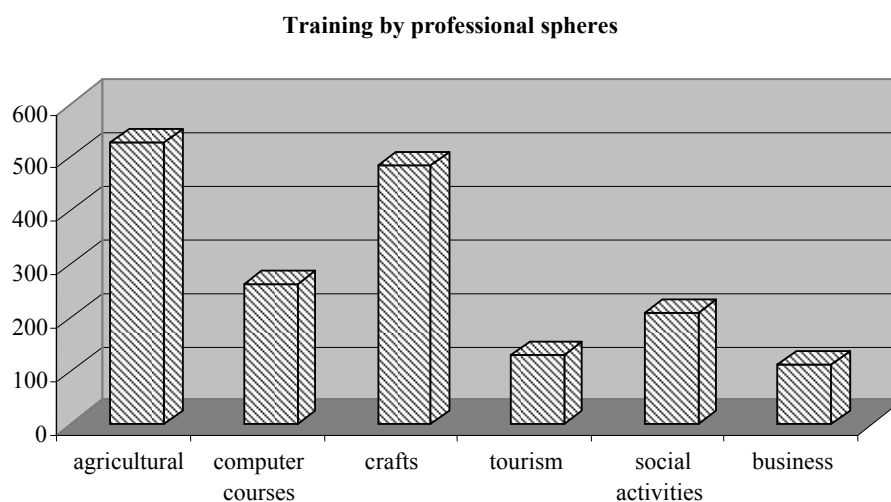
*Graph 2*



### ***Creation of an environment for increased information exchange and training***

Additional qualification in different training initiatives of the 67 demonstration projects have acquired a total of 2,342 people of whom 529 in different agricultural productions, 262 in computer skills, 489 in traditional crafts, 130 in tourism, 207 in social activities and 110 in skills for development of business practices. (*Graph 3*)

*Graph 3*

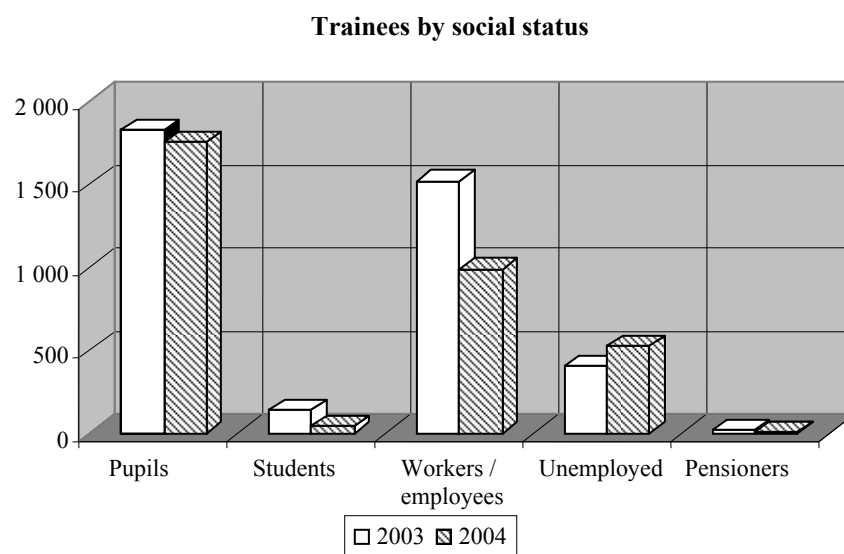




### Qualification acquired by professional spheres

In different educational and training courses provided by the Chitalishte Internet centres (during the period January 2003 – June 2004) 7,223 trainees have been trained. Nearly one third of them are working people, who wanted to increase their qualification. Computer literacy training courses for physicians, for employees of the "Post offices and the communications", of the local offices of the Ministry of the Interior and other administrations and organizations were organized. In the Internet centres employees of over 366 Chitalishte were trained for free or for a small fee. (Graph 4)

Graph 4



The partnership with the local schools for additional training of the school children in the small settlements is very effective. Thanks to it the IC contributes to the reduction of the differences in the quality of the children's education in the small settlements as compared to the bigger towns. During the implementation of the IC activities the Chitalishte-hosts sought the assistance of professional high schools and universities for the elaboration of the educational programmes, the tests for the exams and the training aids. The Chitalishte helped some of the young people, who had passed the training, find jobs in compliance with the Law for encouragement of employment. As a result the number of the local specialists has increased and the Chitalishte Internet centres have become more compatible at the market for such services.

The licensing of the Internet centres under the programmes "Cisco network academy" and "Microsoft IT academies" gave legitimacy to the trainings held and guaranteed their high quality. Thus the lack of motivation of the trainees of the local educational organizations due to the inability to issue licensed certificates upon completion of training, was overcome.

In the 25 Internet centres a total of 200 user places have been created. The IT servicing of the population has improved through the constant enhancement of the professional qualifications and skills of the teams working in them. The Internet centres provide also office and administrative services for which the residents used to

travel to the neighbouring towns. Besides in the IC premises the clients have access to the Internet through dial-up servers and through the established cable or wireless town networks. The scope of the IT services provided by the Chitalishte Internet Centres has increased depending on the needs of the relevant communities.

### ***Attracting new community groups with different ethnic origins***

The number of the beneficiaries of the services from Roma and Turkish ethnic origin is considerable. For the period under review the Chitalishte with demonstration projects have reported 7,237 Roma users of their services and 1,302 people of Turkish origin. The data is received mainly from several projects in settlements with mixed or compact Roma population. The most impressive results are the ones of project "Establishment of a Centre for Information and Administrative Services" of Chitalishte "Vassil Levski" in t. Kyustendil – 4,000 beneficiaries from the compact Roma population in the "Iztok" neighbourhood, Chitalishte "Probuda" in v. Nikola Kozlevo, which serves 387 Roma and 645 Turkish people from the villages of the whole municipality, Chitalishte "Hristo Botev" in v. Partizanin – 673 Roma people, Chitalishte "Razvitie" in t. Razgrad – 116 people of Turkish origin, Chitalishte "Tsvyatko Radoinov" v. Krun – 450 Roma people, Chitalishte "Metodi Draginov" v. Draginovo – 170 Roma people, Chitalishte "Nevo Drom" Sofia – 102 Roma people, Chitalishte "Dobri Voinikov t. Shoumen – 67 Turks, and Chitalishte "Bacho Kiro" v. Iskra – 61 Turks, etc. The information centres, which serve mainly such population ensure free consultations and administrative services and eased access to the resources of the state and municipal institutions.

### ***Increased support to groups at social risk***

The demonstration projects outlined the tendency of an increased interest of the Chitalishte to the issues of the different social groups at risk. The total number of the attracted people with disabilities to the 67 demonstration projects is 1,853. The biggest groups of people with disabilities are: 152 people under the project "Open doors" of Chitalishte "Rodina" in t. Stara Zagora, 108 people with impaired sight in the project "New access to the e-books in Bulgaria" of Chitalishte "Louis Braille" in Sofia; 85 people with impaired sight in the project "Yellow trail" of Chitalishte "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" t. Bourgas; 150 handicapped people were served by Chitalishte "Gradishte" in Svoge. Other 48 are the children deprived of parental care and children with different handicaps with whom Chitalishte "Slovo" v. Petrovo and Chitalishte "Razvitie" t. Belogradchik have worked. 137 children with disabilities in t. Kazanluk under the project "Integration of children with physical disabilities" have been attracted by Chitalishte "Vazrodna Iskra" too. 115 people with physical disabilities from v. Draginovo participated in the project "Centre for social and administrative services", 15 people with physical disabilities of t. Rakovski used the services of the project "The Chitalishte – a social partner of the vulnerable groups". In the project "You can hear" of Chitalishte "Tsar Boris III" Sofia 27 children with cochlear implants (ear problems) learned how to understand the people speaking to them and to speak themselves; 44 children with logopaedic problems of t. Berkovitsa visited the special children's logopaedic office at Chitalishte "Ivan Vazov"; The Day care centre of Chitalishte "Otets Paisii", t. Sandanski works every day with 28

children with physical and mental handicaps under the project "Sun for everyone", etc.

Thanks to the accessible environment built by the project 9 of the Internet centres and 5 Chitalishte with demonstration projects became places for social contacts and integration of the physically handicapped people.

36 of the total of 67 Demonstration projects have included in their activities work with unemployed people. The unemployed have used mainly consultations and information or have participated in different courses for training or vocational qualification. The total number of the unemployed beneficiaries is 6,734. Most of the 25 Internet centres have also held courses for professional re-qualification of unemployed people in partnership with the local Labour offices. Some of the Internet centres provided free or at preferential prices training or access to the modern technologies to orphans, minority groups, and people with disabilities.

### ***Support to entrepreneurship***

Part of the demonstration projects created enabling environment for stimulation of new alternative products in search of new means of livelihood for the local people. The Chitalishte in the village regions were particularly active. Many of them influenced the traditional means of livelihood of the population through the introduction of new agricultural practices and stimulated self-reliance. They cultivated at their own demonstration fields new cultures: rose seedlings (v. Kozlovets, Project "Centre "Vazmozhnosti"), coleseed (v. Lilyache, project "Centre for services and innovations), aronia (t. Dulovo, project "The Aronia – alternative farming in communities with mixed population"), raspberries (t. Troyan, project "Centre for training and re-qualification of different social groups in the production of raspberries"). The Centres for information and consultations established in some village Chitalishte were very useful to the more enterprising people. They worked in partnership with the regional specialized offices for advice in agriculture, which provided concrete, comprehensive and market oriented information (v. Shtruklevo, project "Informational, educational and consultative centre for agriculture"; t. Antonovo, project "Consultative centre and demonstration farming for alternative agriculture"; v. Petarch, project "Information centre in service to the farmers"; v. Smolyanovtsi, project "Centre for information services and consultations"; t. Tervel, project "Educational, consultant and information centre for bee-keeping", etc.).

### **Increased citizen participation in the community**

Many of the demonstration projects have provoked enhanced community participation and stronger commitment of the population of their settlements. It has the form of participation in the planned project activities and in the additional civic initiatives engendered by the projects. In more than 12 of the demonstration projects from the first phase the citizens have been attracted for collection of information about different local issues through questionnaires and opinion polls e.g. in the village of Tsarev Brod the Chitalishte has made a survey for the necessity of the split collection of the waste (Chitalishte "Napredak", project "Protection of the environment – everybody's concern"). At the initiatives of the Chitalishte in the village of Partizanin (Chitalishte "Hristo Botev", project "The Chitalishte – a home for everyone") and in the town of Svoge (Chitalishte "Gradishte", project "Centre for services and consultations") Initiative Committees were formed for the support of a

sick woman and a fundraising campaign for the treatment of a sick child were organised. Two of the projects (in the town of Hissar and in the village of Chepintsi) have introduced books for opinions and proposals of the citizens, which are available at the information offices, established under the projects. A total of 11,138 people have participated in seminars, discussions, competitions, exhibitions, meetings, press conferences, group consultations, roundtables, public lectures, eco-actions, meetings, etc, only in the frameworks of the 31 Chitalishte demonstration projects of the second phase. The demonstration projects have attracted a total of 1,084 permanent volunteers to the Chitalishte activities.

### ***Support to new Chitalishte initiatives***

The project activities have provoked the Chitalishte in seeking new project ideas and opportunities. Some of them a continuation of the project activities, others - completely new ideas originating in the process of implementation of the projects. The Chitalishte-partners of the project have prepared over 70 new project proposals and have applied with other funding organizations and donors as a result of their newly acquired skills for elaboration and management of projects and their new confidence of active participants in the local processes. At the same time many new initiatives have been implemented without project grants thanks to a large public involvement. Some of them have been borrowed from the shared experience of the Chitalishte partners or from community initiatives.

### ***New forms of association***

In the framework of the 67 demonstration projects at the initiative of seven Chitalishte were established public councils for the solution of different local issues. This form of association has gained more and more popularity among the Chitalishte. It ensures big public support, serious partnership network and increased public trust in the organizations involved in the solution of the issue. The established Public council for development in t. Lyubimets, the Public councils for fighting drug addiction in the t. Parvomai, t. Montana, t. Blagoevgrad, the Public councils for development of tourism in the t. Hissar and in t. Kazanluk and the Municipal council "Integra" in t. Hadjidimovo continue their activities after the completion of the projects. New civil associations were restored or newly established as a result of the new project activities: The Club of the beekeepers in v. Shipkovo (Chitalishte "Svetlina", project "Tourist information centre"), the Club of the people with disabilities in v. Nikola Kozlevo (Chitalishte "Probuda", project "Consulting and administrative services"), Club "Dialogue" in t. Razgrad (Chitalishte "Razvitie", project "Teaching, consulting and educational information"), the Public Advisory council and the Beekeepers club in v. Gorsko Slivovo (Chitalishte "Razvitie", project "Ecology, beauty, business").

### ***Community initiatives***

A specific form of community participation, bound to the traditional Chitalishte activities, is the organization of new local holidays and festivals connected to the new project activities. Under the project for development of the local rose production the Chitalishte in v. Kozlovetz organized a Spring holiday with the participation of the whole population (Chitalishte "Razvitie", project "Centre "Vazmozhnosti"). Under the project for stimulation of the development of beekeeping the Chitalishte in the village of Nikolovo initiated the local holiday of honey "The

golden lime tree" with the intention of organizing such holidays annually (Chitalishte "Probuda", project "Information and training centre for bee-keeping"). The Chitalishte in v. Tsarev Brod organized competitions for children's drawings and elaboration of art products from ecological materials (Chitalishte "Napredak", project "Preserving the environment – everybody's concern").

### **Sustainability of the outputs**

#### ***New sustainable Chitalishte structures***

In the period 2002 – 2004 the 67 Chitalishte with funded demonstration projects managed to establish new permanently working structures in the Chitalishte:

- 26 centres providing information, consultations, training, administrative, social and tourist services;
- 9 clubs for groups with special needs;
- 11 art studios, work shops and galleries in the sphere of fine arts and crafts;
- 2 children's entertainment centres and one Sunday school.

The new Chitalishte centres and clubs dispose of repaired offices, workshops and other suitable for the relevant activity Chitalishte premises. They have contemporary office and other professional equipment.

#### ***Sustainable mechanisms for self-financing***

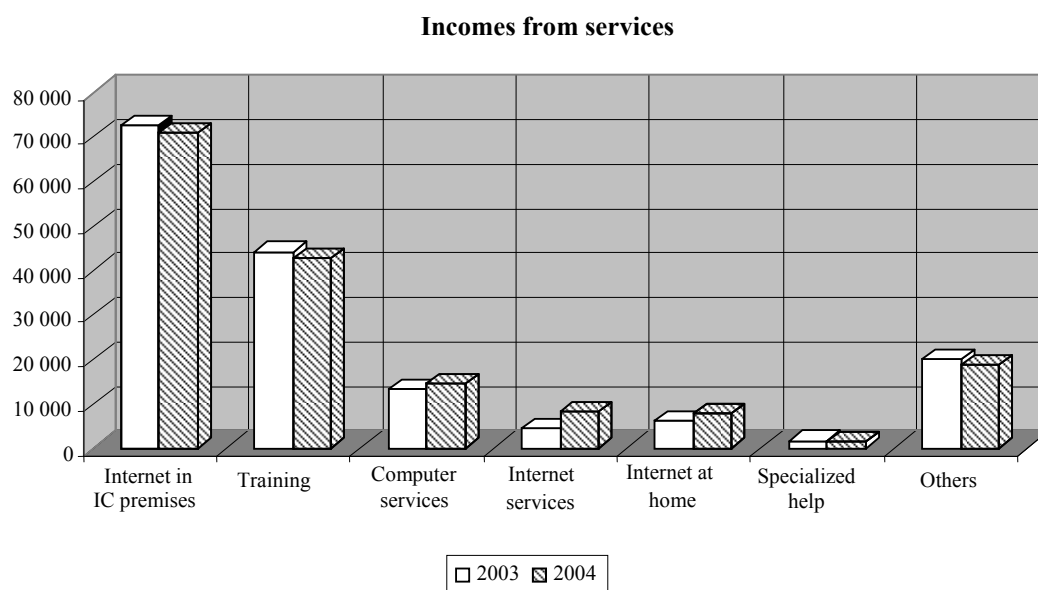
Some of the new demonstration practices have developed mechanisms for self-financing. Depending on the specifics of the projects, the generated incomes may result from the provision of administrative, informational, consultative and training services to the population or from the sale of agricultural production, crafts products or organization of cultural events with financial results. The amount of the incomes depends mostly on the social and economic character of the settlement, on the natural and climatic peculiarities, on the presence of a market and consumer approach to certain types of services. In general the incomes generated through the new activities are relatively small, due partly to the social character of the services. Nevertheless most of the new models are sustainable thanks to the infrastructure built during the projects' implementation, the technical equipment provided, the accumulated experience of the teams of the Chitalishte and the provoked interest and the support of the communities. The total value of the incomes generated by the 67 demonstration projects with duration of one year each is BGN 49,373. The biggest income was generated by Chitalishte "Razvitie-Kozlovets" in project "Centre "Vazmozhnosti" from the sale of rose seedlings produced during the project – BGN 13,000; Chitalishte "Probuda" in v. Nikolovo received BGN 4,500 from the sale of honey and its products produced during its project; Chitalishte "Bratolyubie" in t. Lyubimets – project "Floriculture – an opportunity for social development and integration of the Roma people" got BGN 3,500 from the sale of flowers; the project "The valley of the roses and the Thracian kings" received BGN 2,170 from the sale of a cultural product; Chitalishte "Tsvyatko Radoinov" v. Kran under the project "The Chitalishte - a fireplace of the time"- 2,775 BGN from administrative services; Chitalishte "Vitosha" Sofia under the project "Club folk applied arts" – 1,500 BGN; Chitalishte "M.

Draginov" v. Draginovo under the project "Centre for social and administrative services – 1,290 BGN; Chitalishte "Dobri Voinikov" t. Shoumen under project "Centre for Services for the free time of the children" BGN 1,272 from children's animation; Chitalishte "Vazrazhdane" t. Plovdiv under the project "Ethno-art Centre "Vazrazhdane" – BGN 803 from sale of craft products; etc. Judging by the information about the ways of using their incomes from the projects' activities stated in the Chitalishte reports BGN 16,610 have been used for broadening the new activities, which is a relatively good indicator of sustainability. A big share of the rest of the incomes has been used for support of the Chitalishte institution or has been set aside in funds for further development of its activities.

Income generation from the population is one of the possible means of ensuring sustainability. Many of the demonstration projects supported by project "Chitalishte", mainly the ones in the social, ecological or public spheres, do not generate incomes. That fact does not make them less sustainable for the communities, because the solution of important community issues activates their participatory approach to new unused resources. Part of the projects, mainly the social ones (t. Kyustendil, v. Nikola Kozlevo) have managed to convince their main partner – the municipal authorities in the effectiveness and the necessity of their new activity, which led to a considerable increase of their annual subsidy.

Unlike the demonstration practices the income generation from the consumers of the IT services is a key moment as regards to the sustainability of the Internet centres. For a period of one year and a half active provision of IT services to the population the 25 Internet centres generated incomes to the amount of 325,615 BGN (approx. 203,500 USD). (*Graph 5*) The incomes from the provision of Internet access are considerably higher than the ones from training because of the social effect sought after and the preferential training fees for a number of user groups, even though the usage has been almost the same.

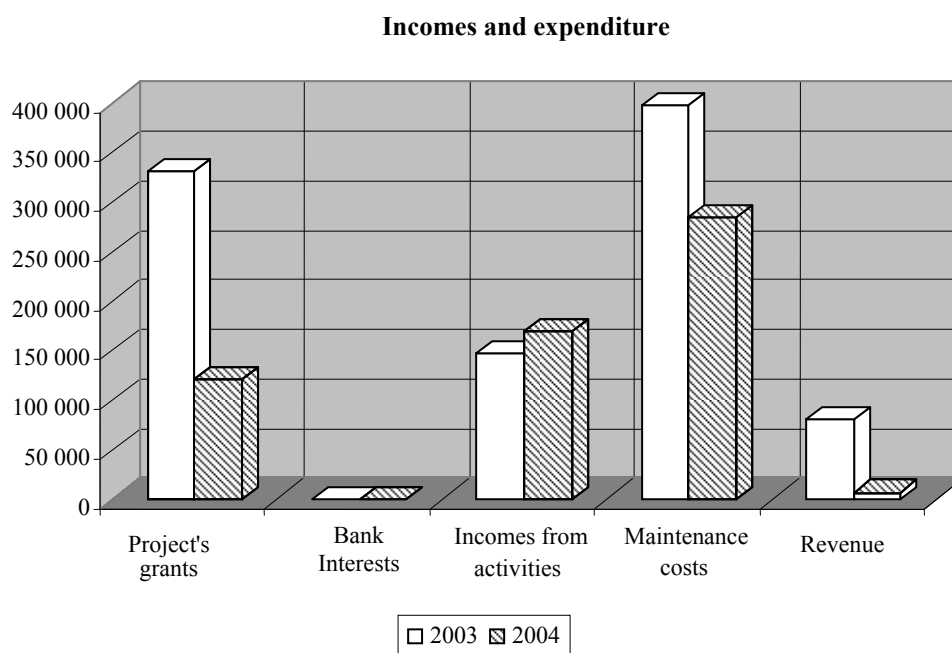
*Graph 5*



The incomes generated during the second reported period (8 months) are higher than the ones of the first period (10 months). The reason for the lower indices during the first period is also the fact that the 25 Chitalishte with Internet centres were

not ready for the implementation of IT activities. In the process of work, however it was found out that the information included in the project proposals for establishment of Internet centres was not a result of an accurate and genuine analysis of the local market. No marketing research was made for the IT services. The Chitalishte managements were not aware of the legal regulations governing the provision of IT services. The above reasons necessitated some of the Chitalishte to reconsider the target groups and the approach to them. In order to overcome the abovementioned problems more active participation of the Chitalishte board members was initiated as well as that of the Chitalishte Internet centre staff.

*Graph 6*

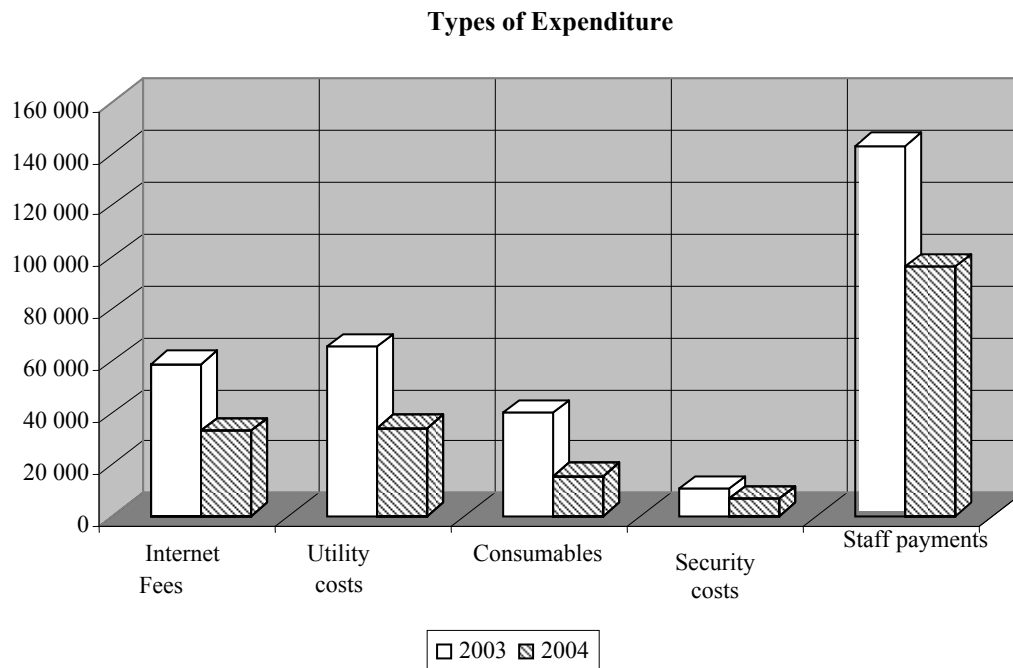


During the second year the financing of the Internet centres, provided by the project, was reduced to 50% of their maintenance costs. That led to further optimization of the management of the activities and growth of income generation. Towards the end of the reporting period the incomes of the Internet centres are lower than the expenditures (*Graphs 6 and 7*). In order to guarantee both the sustainability and the social character of the activities the following actions are initiated: preparation of project proposals to apply for grants from other organizations; more intensive work of the Chitalishte with the municipalities, the labour offices, NGOs, etc.; diversification of the provision of services and flexible working hours and increased responsibilities of the staff. Five of the Internet centres (the ones in t. Smolyan, t. Malko Turnovo, v. Dorkovo, t. Kula, t. Godech) had considerable income generation problems due to incompetent management, bad Internet connectivity, low incomes of the population, and/or strong competitors on the market. Some of them (t. Kula and t. Godech) looked for alternative approaches to compensate for the minimal usage by long-term partnerships with the Labour offices for provision of vocation courses to the unemployed.

Thanks to the activities of the Internet centres the Chitalishte established contacts with other Chitalishte and organizations in the country and abroad e.g. the establishment of the Internet centre in Chitalishte "Bratstvo" in t. Pavlikeni which became a local relay in the "Eurodesk network" – a Youth Information System and was awarded a grant for establishment of a Youth Cultural Information centre.

Another local relay point of the "Eurodesk network" was registered in the Internet centre in t. Pomorie.

*Graph 7*



The sustainability of the Internet centres depends directly on the general condition of the Chitalishte as they have been integrated in the activities of the Chitalishte-hosts. The indicator of their sustainability is their contribution to the development of the Chitalishte institution, as a whole, which could be summarized as follows:

- Positive impact on the Chitalishte image by turning the Internet Centres into modern Information and Training centres;
- Increased flow of young people, bringing with them new ideas and expectations to the Chitalishte;
- Diversification of the services provided by the IT centres, thus attracting representatives of the local business, schools, etc.;
- Provision of information useful to the Chitalishte itself, concerning more opportunities for access to resources, exchange of ideas and more partners.

### ***Contribution of the community to the implementation of the new activities***

The additional contribution of the communities - funds, materials or labour to the implementation of the project activities (including demonstration projects and Internet centres) amounts to 257,741 BGN, which is a serious indicator of the enhanced community activity.

The total value of the additionally attracted resources to the 67 demonstration projects until the present moment is 164,425 BGN - 82,000 BGN from the first 36 demo projects and 82,470 BGN from the second 31 demo projects. Of them the biggest share is the financial contribution of the Chitalishte themselves – 65,556 BGN



(although there was no such special requirement for Chitalishte own contribution). The biggest financial contribution provided by the Chitalishte itself to its demo project is the one of the project "The Valley of the Roses and the Thracian kings" made by Chitalishte "Iskra" in t. Kazanluk - BGN 14,426; Chitalishte "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" t. Bourgas, project "Yellow trail" – 4,850 BGN, Chitalishte "Prosveta" in t. Varna - project "Bulgarian embroidery workshop" contributed 2,650 BGN; Chitalishte "N.Vaptsarov" t. Blagoevgrad – 2,300 BGN, Chitalishte "Ivan Vazov" t. Berkovitsa – 2,000 BGN, Chitalishte "Yane Sandanski" in t. Hadjidimovo and Chitalishte "Y.Yovkov" in t. Alfatar contributed 1,620 BGN each; Chitalishte "Probuda" in v. Nikolovo –1,500 BGN, Chitalishte "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" t. Rakovski – 1,452 BGN, Chitalishte "Razvitie" v. Telish – 1,412 BGN, Chitalishte "Rodopska Prosveta" t. Devin – 810 BGN, etc.

The partnership and the support of the local authorities during the implementation of the demonstration projects are considerable. The total value of the funds invested by the different municipalities is BGN 42,713, without taking into consideration the land and buildings used by the projects. The biggest financial contribution is the one of the municipality of Bourgas to the project "Yellow trail" – 12,162 BGN, of the municipality of t. Stara Zagora to the project "Open doors" – BGN 9,699; the contribution of the municipality of t. Kazanluk towards the project "The Valley of the Roses and the Thracian kings" is BGN 3,000, the municipality of Dren to the project "Revival and development of crafts and traditions in t. Radomir region" – BGN 2,700; the municipality of t. Tervel to project "Educational advice and information centre on bee-keeping" to Chitalishte "D. Donchev – Doktora" – BGN 2,620, the mayoralty in v. Shipkovo contributed BGN 2,150 to the project "Tourist Information Centre", of the municipality of t. Berkovitsa to the project "Children's centre for entertainment and culture" of Chitalishte "Ivan Vazov" – BGN 1,800, of the municipality of Ivanovo to the project "Consultative centre for agriculture", Chitalishte "Vazrazhdane" v. Shtraklevo – 1,300 BGN, of the municipality of Cherven Bryag to project "We seek future in the past" of Chitalishte "Razvitie" v. Telish – BGN 750, the municipality of t. Rakovski to the project "The Chitalishte – a social partner to the vulnerable people" of Chitalishte "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" – BGN 660, etc. Direct funding and provision of material and equipment have been attracted from sponsors to the amount of BGN 47,590.

The Chitalishte agricultural demo projects cultivate a total of 144 decare of land which was given to them by the municipalities for the demo projects. Some municipalities and mayoralties actively have supported the implementation of the projects by providing municipal buildings and facilities: a greenhouse for growing flowers in t. Lyubimets, an experimental agricultural field in the v. Gorsko Slivovo and a shed in the v. Nikolovo, as well as office equipment for many of the centres.

The establishment of the Internet Centres in Chitalishte-hosts also attracted the attention and the active participation of the communities and the local authorities in the different stages of preparation for and the actual establishment of the Internet Centres. Their contribution to the repair works on the Chitalishte premises was of a substantive character, thus insuring appropriate conditions for the operation of the Internet Centres. The Chitalishte-hosts themselves committed considerable resources of their own (BGN 31,836 or approx. USD 16,700) and participated with voluntary labour in the repair works. The local authorities invested funds for the improvement

of the environment and the conditions for work of the Internet Centres (BGN 46,539 or approx. USD 24,500), which were used for the repair of the premises, general repair of the Chitalishte buildings, for insurance of qualitative Internet connectivity, building of heating installations and procurement of heaters, cabling and additional refurbishment, as well as provision of free administrative services. Local firms and physical persons sponsored the Internet Centres and donated materials and equipment. The total value of the local contribution in the establishment of the 25 Internet Centres is BGN 93,316 (approx. USD 50,000), which almost reaches the total amount of funds granted for emergency repairs of the Internet Centres by the Chitalishte project.

The additional efforts made for the development of the Chitalishte Internet centres as Information and Training centres also contributed to their sustainability. 24 of them were licensed as Microsoft IT academies and as Cisco local academies providing high level licensed IT training.

### ***Sustainability of the human resources and management***

The sustainability of the new activities depends to a large degree on the skills and commitment of the newly-recruited teams and the people working in the Chitalishte. During the period of implementation of the 67 demonstration projects a total of 75 new assistants have been recruited. 225 permanent consultants have been engaged for more than 3 months during the same period and there is a tendency that they will continue supporting professionally the new activities. Both the newly-recruited employees and the Chitalishte teams have spent a lot of efforts to increase their qualifications in the spheres of computer literacy, team work and lobbying, communications, additional knowledge of the legislation. The project co-ordinators focused on the development of additional specific skills: e.g. methodology of leading group trainings, marketing and management of cultural products, work with groups with specific needs, management of business activities, skills for facilitating public discussions for identification of needs.

### **Partners**

During the implementation of the project activities the Chitalishte managed to set up a large network of partners from the local institutions and organizations. Their support was done in three main directions:

- Support to the implementation of the project activities;
- Provision of resources;
- Institutional support as a guarantee of the legitimacy of the new activities.

During the implementation of the new demonstration project activities the Chitalishte managed to attract over 366 partners (respectively 170 in phase 2002-2003 and 196 in phase 2003-2004). Along with their traditional partners – the municipalities, the different municipal offices, the local educational establishments, the Chitalishte found new partners among the business people, the social homes, universities, NGOs. (*table 1*)

Table 1

Partners	Municipalities	State & Municipal offices	Educational establishments	Social homes	Business	Cooperatives	Others	Total
Demonstration projects-stage I	37	41	41	7	24		20	170
Demonstration projects-stage II	24	25	38	4	27	2	76	196
Total:	61	66	79	11	51	2	96	366

Among the most active partners are the District services for advice in agriculture, Labour offices, Regional Inspectorates for Environmental Protection, the Sanitary Inspectorates, the Offices for social welfare, the State Forestry and others.

As a result of the joint initiative of project Chitalishte and the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) for provision of accessible environment to handicapped people in the Chitalishte Internet centres an assessment of the buildings was made and repair works were carried out in 9 Internet Centres.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHITALISHTE**

### **National Capacity Building Programme**

The National Capacity Building Programme (NCBP) is the main part of the strategy for institutional strengthening of the Chitalishte, developed in the framework of Project "Chitalishte". The programme offers a systematic model of training and consulting of 300 Chitalishte-partners, developed after a needs assessment was made for training and development of the 900 Chitalishte, which initially applied for participation in the project. The analysis of the results of the institutional survey and the research of the environment in which the Chitalishte work contributed to the formulation of the following objectives of the programme:

- Development of a new style of management of the Chitalishte;
- Building of the capacity of the Chitalishte as a learning and training institution;
- Elaboration of training programmes and products for and by the Chitalishte;
- Broadening of the partnerships of the Chitalishte, local authorities and the NGOs;
- Creation of an environment for active participation of the Chitalishte in the solution of local issues.

The planned objectives have been achieved through a package of training activities, approaches and methods, which periodically were assessed and developed by the project's team and the national consultants with the participation of the Chitalishte-partners.

### ***General design and standards of NCBP***

The national training programme has three interdependent sub-programmes:

- Modular training of the 300 Chitalishte-partners;
- Specialized training and consultations for Chitalishte with projects and new activities;
- Training of trainers.

The training standards concerning the work of the team of trainers and consultants, the participation of the Chitalishte in the overall training process, the design of each module, the development and dissemination of the methodological aids, the methods for monitoring and evaluation were developed by "Chitalishte" project.

### ***Evaluation and analysis of the results***

Each training activity was assessed by the participants regarding its indicators for effectiveness, application and impact on the activities of the Chitalishte-participants. The assessment was made at the end of the trainings and it influenced the further development of the training programme, while the long-term results were evaluated through the activities and initiatives of the Chitalishte.

Two intermediary studies to assess the effectiveness of NCBP were carried out at a national level:

- Internal evaluation (February – March 2003)
- External evaluation of the progress of project "Chitalishte", including its NCBP component (June – August 2003).

The periodic surveillance and the mid-term evaluations covered the NCBP results concerning the Chitalishte, the local authorities and the Chitalishte network. The results and tendencies could be presented in six thematic groups.

### ***Results achieved and development tendencies***

#### ***• A new style for Chitalishte management with increased legal, financial, organizational and social competency was developed***

The participation of the Chitalishte in the nine training modules covering key institutional aspects of their activities led to the accumulation of knowledge and capacity building in the following spheres: legal environment, institutional development, financial management of the Chitalishte, community work, public policies, cultural management, project management, PR and work with the media, Informational Technologies. The concrete results could be summarized as follows:

- Experience in elaboration of projects. 221 Chitalishte applied with 289 project proposals for funding under the project "Chitalishte" grants schemes.
- Increased participation of the Chitalishte in the financing programmes (the National "Culture" Fund at the Ministry of Culture, the Open Society Foundation, "Workshop for Civil Initiatives" foundation, Euro practices, PHARE Access, United Netherlands Foundations, Foundation for Reform in Local Governance, the "Youth" programme, etc). Over 70 of the projects implemented by the Chitalishte under national and international programmes have been identified by them as resulting from the NCBP.

- Increased management capacity of the Chitalishte to solve their own organizational issues and problems deriving from their environment. Various legal, financial, social, cultural and civic problems have been resolved with the active participation of the Chitalishte teams.
- Improved quality of the cultural, educational and other products of the Chitalishte. The products meet the marketing requirements: to be developed for a concrete client, to be part of the communication strategy of the Chitalishte and of its efforts to turn into a resource centre.

• ***Changed image of the Chitalishte as a learning organization***

As a result of their participation in NCBP the Chitalishte teams and their partners recognize the Chitalishte institution as developing through training and new activities. The Chitalishte have identified new training and consultation needs since they started implementing their demonstration and Internet centres projects. 182 project coordinators and specialists in the main project activities (Chitalishte employees, Internet centre specialists and partners: specialists and accountants in the municipalities) were trained in the framework of six specialized trainings (marketing of crafts products, alternative employment, social activities for groups and communities, public relations, communications of the Internet centre, financial management of projects). The number of the participants in the training activities increased from 300 to 550, which led to the strengthening of the Chitalishte resources for team work under common standards and for common goals.

The number of Chitalishte beneficiaries of consultations has increased: 400 Chitalishte have requested and have received expert help in various spheres of knowledge and Chitalishte practices:

- development of the financial policy of the Chitalishte;
- solution of legal cases;
- organizational development, integrating the new projects and activities;
- implementation and management of projects;
- elaboration of educational programmes and services;
- work with the media and the portal site [www.chitalishte.bg](http://www.chitalishte.bg);
- work with the local authorities;
- organization of cultural events;
- work with the Informational and Communication Technologies (ICT).

The expanded team of project "Chitalishte" has provided 1,300 consultations of which 50 consultations were made by the national consultants, over 250 - by the specialists in the National Coordination Office and approximately 1,000 – by the RSC teams.

The Chitalishte apply the acquired knowledge and experience in the activities financed by project "Chitalishte" and in their traditional cultural, educational and public activities.

• ***Developed consultant and training capacity offered as a service to the Chitalishte network and the local community***

As a result of three modules of the "Training of Trainers" 25 Chitalishte representatives have become trainers in different spheres. With the support of the

NCO Training Specialist and the RSC teams they carry out the "Chitalishte training Chitalishte" programme. The programme includes the organization of trainings for Chitalishte, which do not participate in NCBP, on subjects requested by them. In the framework of the project 10 Chitalishte-trainers (Chitalishte "Tsvyat" – t. Vidin, Chitalishte "Svetlina" – v. Gara Bov, Chitalishte "Lik" – t. Pleven, Chitalishte "Hristo Botev" – t. Rousse, Chitalishte "Zora" – t. Dupnitsa, Chitalishte "Svetlina" – t. Pomorie, Chitalishte "Probuda" – t. Varna, Chitalishte "Drouzhba" – t. Sliven, Chitalishte "Nadezhda" – v. Vardun and Chitalishte "Ivan Vazov" – t. Hissar) have trained 270 representatives of Chitalishte on the subjects: elaboration of projects, institutional development and ICT.

The peer programme "Chitalishte training Chitalishte" has broadened its scope by attracting not only Chitalishte representatives but also representatives of the local authorities and civic organizations (the municipal administration, the "Culture" departments, the "Social activities" departments of the towns of Dolna Mitropolia, Nikopol, Levski, Vidin and Kostinbrod, the village of Petarch, municipal and regional libraries in Montana and Plovdiv, houses of culture in t. Varna and t. Popovo, school boards, etc.)

- **Training materials elaborated for and by the Chitalishte**

Training packages for a total of 15 modular and specialized trainings were elaborated and disseminated in the framework of NCBP. Seven methodological manuals of the series "Contemporary Chitalishte" have been developed and printed: "Community Development", "Project Management", "Basis of the Financial Management of the Chitalishte", "Institutional Development", "Cultural Management", "Public Policies" and "Legal Environment of the Chitalishte".

Due to the active participation of the Chitalishte in the overall training process and the application of the new know-how, they have developed essential competency for the training standards:

- Knowledge for needs assessment, planning and design of training programmes for a concrete target group;
- Knowledge concerning the requirements towards the training and informational activities;
- Assessment skills and provision of feedback for the training results.

- **Created environment for active participation in the local problem solution**

According to the Chitalishte and their partners the NCBP contributed to the creation of an environment encouraging and supporting the Chitalishte potential for active participation in the solution of important issues of the community. The training covers all steps in the work with local issues: from the formulation of the idea of a project to the assessment and sharing of the successes and difficulties in its implementation.

The feedback information from the participants considers NCBP as a supporting environment for:

- realization of the link of the needs of the local community to the Chitalishte activities;
- establishment of partnerships working for the local development;
- effective communication leading to overcoming of the isolation and creation of a working Chitalishte network.

This assessment demonstrates the Chitalishte understanding of the role of the learning and training organizations in the local development and for the standards, which must be developed and applied in its work with the community.

### **Chitalishte Portal Site ([www.chitalishte.bg](http://www.chitalishte.bg))**

For approximately a year and a half after the official launch of the Chitalishte Portal Site [www.chitalishte.bg](http://www.chitalishte.bg) it has turned into a source of ideas and information, and an efficient communication tool. The total number of the registered Chitalishte is over 400, more than 50 partner and funding organizations are presented. "Chitalishte" project prepared a booklet "Step by Step" explaining in detail how to use the Chitalishte Portal site, to register and publish information. The booklet was printed in 2,500 copies and was disseminated to 1,500 Chitalishte.

The number of visitors and the visited pages has grown seven times in the last year and a half.(*table 2*)

*Table 2*

<b>Month</b>	<b>Unique users</b>	<b>Visited pages</b>
July 2004	6808	52364
June 2004	6277	49641
May 2004	6248	63061
April 2004	6818	48919
March 2004	6930	48427
February 2004	5570	43272
January 2004	4417	36716
December 2003	3740	46509
November 2003	2919	21371
October 2003	3419	29105
September 2003	6553	31387
August 2003	1800	19361
July 2003	4004	24668
June 2003	2444	24694
May 2003	2434	25032
April 2003	2760	32497
March 2003	2656	31327
February 2003	1806	34375
January 2003	1527	26084
December 2002	1043	27600

Based on the active participation of the Chitalishte portal site in the net and the accumulated experience during this period a specification for a change of its structure, functions and design was formulated. The proposed changes took into consideration the opinions posted by its users. The implementation of the changes for the update of the site was concluded in September 2003. New elements were added as "Links", "Downloads", "Accents", etc. The English version of the portal site is already activated.

The information which has been submitted to the site is edited and the most interesting pieces are put in the e-bulletin of the site. It has been sent on the 1<sup>st</sup> working day of each month by e-mail to all its registered subscribe

In September 2003 [www.chitalishte.bg](http://www.chitalishte.bg) was nominated in the competition for computer arts "Computer Space 2003" and it was awarded the first prize in the division "Community and Institutions" in the category "Web design". The prize was personally presented by Georgi Parvanov, President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The Chitalishte portal site was also nominated in the division "Institutional Site" of the competition "BG site 2003" and it won the prize of the public.

## **Publicity**

### ***Regional forums***

During the period 16 March – 2 April 2004 the team of "Chitalishte" Project together with the Chitalishte and their partners organized six Regional forums on the subject "*The Chitalishte and the Local Development*" in the towns of Kardjali, Sliven, Shoumen, Pleven, Vidin and Blagoevgrad. The forums are part of the public strategy of the project for creation of a positive image of the contemporary Chitalishte and their goal was:

- to demonstrate the ***enhanced potential*** of the Chitalishte as publicly engaged local organizations;
- to promote the ***successful experience***, practices and local policies of the Chitalishte in the framework of the funded projects;
- to demonstrate the ***changed attitudes*** of the local authorities and institutions, organizations and the communities towards the Chitalishte;
- to show ***the tendencies*** in the development of the Chitalishte sector, outlined through the eyes of the partners;
- to present the ***Chitalishte products*** and projects for community development;

The total number of the participants of the six regional forums is 810 among which the Chitalishte-partners and non-partners of the projects from the relevant regions, representatives of the local authorities and district administrations, local NGOs, schools, social homes, state and municipal administrations, media. The total number of the local authorities, who greeted the participants in the forums, took part with presentations as partners, or attended the events was 143. Among them were the Regional Governors of Blagoevgrad, Sliven and Shoumen and the Deputy Governors



of Vidin and Pleven, the mayors of the big municipal centres Smolyan, Pleven, Sliven, many mayors and deputy mayors of the smaller municipalities and mayoralities. The funded Chitalishte projects were presented at the forums by 63 partners of the Chitalishte.

Exhibitions of the Chitalishte products and projects were organized as accompanying events in the framework of each regional forum presenting the results of the Chitalishte demonstration projects and the Internet centres. The total number of the Chitalishte with their own stands was 114, where they presented their products, provided information about their projects and shared their experience and results achieved. The exhibitions were open to the public.

### **National Forum**

The summarized results from the implementation of Chitalishte Project were presented to the public at a National Forum "Direction Chitalishte" too, which took place in Sofia on 26 May 2004. The forum was attended by over 200 guests and participants among which representatives of Chitalishte partners, NGOs, state institutions and local authorities. The forum was held under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov. The guests were greeted by the Minister of Culture Prof. Dr. Bozhidar Abrashev, the US Ambassador to Bulgaria H.E. James Pardew, the UN Resident Co-ordinator in Bulgaria Mr. Neil Buhne and by the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Ms. Carmen Gonsalves. The Chitalishte representatives presented the new development tendencies by sharing good practices of their activities in three thematic modules:

- the Chitalishte – cultural, educational and informational community centres;
- the Chitalishte in support of the local development;
- the Chitalishte caring for the different – social and cultural integration of ethnic communities and groups at risk.

A two-day Chitalishte exhibition bazaar of craft products made by the Chitalishte-partners under their demonstration projects was officially opened in the Euro-Bulgarian Centre of the Ministry of Culture on the next day after the forum. 18 Chitalishte from the whole country presented souvenirs made in the local folklore tradition, clothes and accessories, rugs, earthenware, embroidery, etc.

### ***Permanent radio programme in the "Horizont do obed" module of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR)***

At the beginning of 2004 the broadcast of the permanent radio programme under the heading "The Bulgarian Chitalishte – the tradition meets the future" as part of the module "Horizont do obed" was launched. The broadcasts had a duration of 30 minutes each and were on the air every Monday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. During the period January – June 2004 - 21 broadcasts were aired on BNR. Representatives of Chitalishte throughout the country and their partners, beneficiaries of the services under different project activities, representatives of the supporting institutions and the team of the project took part in the special Chitalishte programmes from the studio or in telephone interviews. Through the diverse Chitalishte experiences the programmes contributed to building the public image of the contemporary Chitalishte.

### ***Documentary film on the Chitalishte***

The positive experience of the Chitalishte as active participants in the local development was presented to the general public through a 27-min documentary film "Chitalishte – community leader". The film shows practices of the experience of "Chitalishte" Project in three Chitalishte demonstration projects. The documentary was aired by the Bulgarian National TV in prime time on 31 May 2004 and on the satellite channel "Bulgaria". The film was copied on VHS cassettes and DVD in Bulgarian and in English.

### ***"Posoka Chitalishte" Newsletter***

Twenty three issues of Project Chitalishte newsletter "Posoka Chitalishte" were printed and disseminated among 2,000 subscribers for free – among them 900 Chitalishte throughout the country. Among the other subscribers there are state institutions, municipal administrations, educational establishments, international organizations, NGOs, and media.

### ***Media coverage***

The results of Chitalishte Project were regularly covered in the national and regional media. The local media showed bigger interest to the project initiative due to the active attitude of the Chitalishte hosts of Internet Centres and the ones with demonstration projects. In the progress of the project over 2,000 publications were made presenting the new mission of the Chitalishte. The Chitalishte learned how to attract the attention of the media and to produce news. The Chitalishte acquired new skills connected with the communication process, with building of trust and work with the media.

### ***Official visits***

The UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Bulgaria Mr. Neil Buhne was present at the official opening of the crafts workshop of the demonstration project "Workshop "Tradition" of Chitalishte "Rodopska Iskra", t. Devin and the official opening of the Sunday school in Chitalishte "Aprilov-Palauzov" t. Gabrovo. He also visited the Internet centre in v. Momchilovtsi and t. Smolyan and met with the IC team and beneficiaries of the IT services. Mr. Buhne visited also Chitalishte "Rodina" t. Stara Zagora, Chitalishte "Vazrazhdane" t. Plovdiv, Chitalishte "Saglasie" t. Teteven, as well as the RSC in Shoumen and Sliven. He opened the Regional forum in t. Shoumen and attended its work.

The Ambassador of the Royal Kingdom of the Netherlands H. E. Baroness Henriette van Lynden visited the offices of the Regional Support Centres in Kardjali (March 2002), RSC Vidin (May 2003) and RSC Pleven (October 2003). Besides the work of the RSC she was introduced also to the progress of the demonstration project of Chitalishte "Tsvyat" - "Tourist Information Centre" and the gallery bazaar established under the project. She also visited Chitalishte "Saglasie" in t. Pleven where the project "Art Centre "Kolorit" was presented to her.

The US Ambassador to Bulgaria Mr. James Pardew visited the office of RSC Kardjali and was introduced to the activities of project "Chitalishte" since its pilot phase. He met with amateur actors and professionals from different formations of Chitalishte "Obedinenie", t.Kardjali.

The Director of the USAID Mission in Bulgaria Ms. Debra McFarland visited the Internet Centre in Chitalishte "Bratstvo" t. Pavlikeni and was introduced to the activities of some of the Chitalishte children's art formations.

### **Sustainability of Chitalishte Project achievements**

The mid-term external evaluation of Project "Chitalishte" which was carried out by independent evaluators in the period July – August 2003<sup>1</sup> recommended that project "Community Development and Participation through the Chitalishte Network" should transform after its official completion into an autonomous non-governmental organization, which must continue the new approach to the Chitalishte and meet their development needs. The successor of the results and the policy applied by the "Chitalishte" Project is the **Chitalishte Development Foundation** (CDF), which has already been established and was registered in court in September 2004.

The transformation of "Chitalishte" Project into a non-governmental organization has the following priorities:

- to leave the phase of pilot approach to the development of the Chitalishte and creation of opportunities for application of long-term development strategies;
- to keep the opportunity to further build on the accumulated experience and achievements of "Chitalishte" Project;
- consistent application of already tested in practice mechanisms and working approaches to the Chitalishte development;
- to identify the long-term needs for Chitalishte development (new resources should be attracted);
- greater flexibility of approaches and operations; better adaptability to the changing needs of the environment and of the target group;
- to keep the strategic partnership with the institutions, which have so far supported the Chitalishte through the "Chitalishte" Project: the Ministry of Culture, UNDP, USAID, the MATRA Programme of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the local authorities, NGOs, media, etc.

The newly-created Chitalishte Development Foundation is built on the good institutional groundwork of "Chitalishte" Project. The foundation inherits its organizational structure, consisting of a central office and 6 regional centres in the towns of Shoumen, Pleven, Vidin, Blagoevgrad, Kardjali and Sliven, which will allow it to reach out to all Chitalishte in the country. CDF accepts the internal mechanisms for management and communication tested in the progress of the project, the good

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<sup>1</sup> Chitalishte Project – Community Development and Participation through the Chitalishte Network, Mid-term Evaluation, July-August 2003, Deyan Kiuranov, Mariana Milosheva-Krushe, Georgi Genchev

team work and the impact of Chitalishte Project. The foundation inherits the legacy of the comparatively long history of the project. It keeps the channels for access to the Chitalishte network and is able to activate it. The CDF team knows particularly well the peculiarities of the Chitalishte sector, including the specific characteristics of the different types of settlements, the needs of the local communities, the interrelation of the local institutions and the capacity of the different Chitalishte teams. It has an accurate database for the Chitalishte partners and their good practices and lessons learnt, analyses and expertise. It has kept the resource of "Chitalishte" Project of external consultants and professionals in different spheres. And last and not least CDF keeps the internal capacity built during the project for monitoring, reporting and supervision of the processes on site.